

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1-58. (canceled)

59. (previously presented) An assembly comprising:

a suction source;

an instrument to be positioned in or around a passage surrounded by vascular tissue; and

a stabilizer for stabilizing said vascular tissue surrounding said passage with respect to the instrument,

wherein the stabilizer is provided with one or more suction nozzles running in the shape of a loop, which suction nozzles are operationally connected to the suction source in order to suck tightly to tissue close to and around said passage, which may still have to be made,

wherein the instrument has a head section for performing operations on vascular tissue,

wherein the stabilizer comprises a tubular working duct defined by a tubular wall and having a length and a diameter extending transverse to the length, wherein the length extends in an axial direction from a proximal end of the working duct to a

open distal end of the working duct, and wherein the length is larger than the diameter,

wherein the loop of said one or more suction nozzles is provided at the distal end of the working duct and extends in circumferential direction of the working duct,

wherein the instrument is in said axial direction, removably insertable through the proximal end into the working duct such that the instrument and the stabilizer can be separated into distinct elements, and

wherein the stabilizer and the instrument are provided with, respectively, an instrument stop provided on the stabilizer and a stabilizer stop provided on the instrument, which stops define a stop position when in contact with one another, and wherein, when the instrument is inserted through the proximal end into the working duct and when the stops are in the stop position, the stops, unambiguously define the position of the head section with respect to the position of the loop shape.

60. (previously presented) The assembly according to claim 59, wherein the instrument is an applicator for positioning and fixing a fixing device in or around the passage, the head section being equipped for carrying and releasing the fixing device.

61. (previously presented) The assembly according to claim 90, wherein the stabilizer is provided with said guide, and wherein the one or more suction nozzles running in the shape of a loop and the guide are firmly linked to one another in such a way that the mutual positions of the loop shape and guide are fixed with respect to one another.

62. (previously presented) The assembly according to claim 90, wherein the guide is provided with a scale with a zero point and wherein the distance from the zero point to the loop shape is chosen such that when, the instrument stop and stabilizer stop are in the stop position and aligned with the zero point, the head section, or at least a fixing device provided thereon, is located at the distal bottom end of the stabilizer.

63-64. (canceled)

65. (previously presented) The assembly according to claim 59, wherein at least one axial suction duct that joins the suction source to said one or more suction nozzles is located in the wall of the working duct.

66. (previously presented) The assembly according to claim 59, wherein the one or more suction nozzles running in the

shape of a loop comprise one or more axial suction nozzles opening in the axial direction of the working duct.

67. (previously presented) The assembly according to claim 59, wherein the one or more suction nozzles running in the shape of a loop comprise one or more radial suction nozzles opening in the radial direction of the working duct.

68. (previously presented) The assembly according to claim 67, wherein the one or more radial suction nozzles running in the shape of a loop comprise one or more inclined suction nozzles opening outwards obliquely with respect to the axial direction of the working duct.

69. (currently amended) The assembly according to claim 67, wherein the one or more radial suction nozzles ~~opening~~ open in the radially inward direction of the working duct.

70. (previously presented) The assembly according to claim 59, wherein the part of the stabilizer that comprises the one or more suction nozzles running in the shape of a loop has a shape adapted to the shape of the tissue where the suction nozzle has to be positioned.

71. (previously presented) The assembly according to claim 59, wherein all or some of the one or more suction nozzles running in the shape of a loop are provided with segments that can be coupled to one another.

72. (previously presented) The assembly according to claim 59, wherein the part of the stabilizer that comprises the one or more suction nozzles running in the shape of a loop comprises at least two groups of suction nozzles that are not connected to one another, such that vacuum can be applied to the groups independently of one another.

73. (previously presented) The assembly according to claim 59, wherein the part of the stabilizer that comprises the one or more suction nozzles running in the shape of a loop can be completely or partially uncoupled from the rest of the stabilizer.

74. (previously presented) The assembly according to claim 59, wherein the suction nozzles are provided on at least two segments defining the loop shape and wherein more than one of said segments are adjustable in the radial direction, viewed with respect to the loop shape, by means of an adjustment mechanism in order to constrict or widen the passage, after having sucked the tissue close to the passage tightly all round, by adjusting more

than one of the adjustable segments inwards or outwards, respectively.

75. (previously presented) The assembly according to claim 59, wherein the suction nozzles are provided on at least two segments defining the loop shape and wherein more than one of said segments can be adjusted with respect to one another by means of an adjustment mechanism, the movement of the adjustable segments describing a straight or curved line in order to move the adjustable segments towards one another or away from one another by adjusting more than one of the adjustable segments towards one another or, respectively, away from one another.

76. (previously presented) The assembly according to claim 59, wherein the loop shape has a ring-shaped or circular or ellipsoidal or oval-like or tubular or saddle-shaped or 3-fold sine shaped or bean- or kidney-shaped contour.

77. (previously presented) The assembly according to claim 60, comprising said fixing device and said applicator for said fixing device of the type having a tubular member, which member is provided with flange fingers arranged distributed around the periphery of the tubular member which flange fingers can be or have been reversibly bent, against a resilient force, from a position projecting outwards with respect to the tubular

member into a straightened position in which the projection of the respective flange fingers on a radial transverse surface of the tubular member is essentially on or within the periphery of said tubular member.

78. (previously presented) The assembly according to claim 77, wherein the flange fingers are provided with openings.

79. (previously presented) The assembly according to claim 60, comprising said applicator provided with said fixing device of the type comprising a tubular member provided with pins arranged distributed around the periphery, each pin being arranged on an arm that is attached by one end to the tubular member in a manner which permits swinging about a hinge axis, and the arms and pins being movable, by swinging about the hinge axis, from an insertion position, in which they are located essentially inside the tubular member, into a fixing position in which at least the pins, viewed in the radial direction, project outside the tubular member in order to penetrate the surrounding vessel wall tissue.

80. (currently amended) The assembly according to claim 77, wherein the applicator comprises:

[[•]]an elongated support member with, at the distal end thereof, a support ring that fits inside the tubular member

of the fixing device, which support ring has an external peripheral surface suitable for supporting the tubular member;

[[•]]an obstructing member that can be moved parallel to the elongated support member from an obstructing position at least partially overlapping at least the straightened, distal flange fingers into a release position completely exposing said flange fingers.

81. (previously presented) The assembly according to claim 59, wherein at least one sensor is provided on, in or at one or more components of the assembly.

82. (previously presented) The assembly according to claim 81, wherein the at least one sensor is in the shape of a loop on, at or close to the stabilizer and/or instrument.

83. (previously presented) The assembly according to claim 59, wherein at least one marker for interaction with navigation means is provided on, in or at one or more components of the assembly and/or tissues in or around a passage surrounded by vascular tissue.

84. (previously presented) The assembly according to claim 83, wherein the at least one marker is provided in the shape



of a loop, and/or in or around a passage surrounded by vascular tissue.

85. (currently amended) The assembly according to claim 59, wherein the stabilizer is provided with a ring shaped suction body comprising said one or more suction ~~nozzle~~ nozzles running in the shape of said loop, wherein the loop extends in circumferential direction of the suction body, and wherein the suction source comprise a suction line opening into a suction passage formed in the ~~inerior~~ interior of the suction body, which suction passage, in turn, is in communication with the one or more suction ~~nozzle~~ nozzles.

86. (currently amended) An assembly comprising:

a suction source;

a first instrument to be positioned in or around a passage surrounded by vascular tissue; and

a stabilizer for stabilizing vascular tissue surrounding a passage with respect to the first instrument,

wherein the stabilizer is provided with one or more suction nozzles running in the shape of a loop, which suction nozzles are operationally connected to the suction source in order to suck tightly to tissue close to and around said passage, which may still have to be made,

wherein the first instrument has a head section for performing operations on vascular tissue,

wherein the stabilizer comprises a tubular working duct defined by a tubular wall and having a length and a diameter extending transverse to the length, wherein the length extends in an axial direction from a proximal end of the working duct to an open distal end of the working duct, and wherein the length is larger than the diameter,

wherein the loop of said one or more suction nozzles is provided at the distal end of the working duct and extends in circumferential direction of the working duct,

wherein the first instrument is, in said axial direction, removably insertable through the proximal end into the working duct such that the first instrument and the stabilizer can be separated so that at least a second instrument can be removably positioned via the proximal end into the working duct, and

wherein the stabilizer and the first instrument are provided with, respectively, an instrument stop provided on the stabilizer and a stabilizer stop provided on the first instrument, which stops define a stop position when in contact with one another, and wherein, when the instrument is inserted through the proximal end into the working duct and when the stops are in the stop position, the stops unambiguously define the position of the head section with respect to the position of the loop shape.

87. (previously presented) An assembly comprising:

a suction source;

an instrument to be positioned in or around a passage surrounded by vascular tissue; and

a stabilizer for stabilizing said vascular tissue surrounding said passage with respect to the instrument,

wherein the stabilizer is provided with one or more suction nozzles running in the shape of a loop, which suction nozzles are operationally connected to the suction source in order to suck tightly to tissue close to and around said passage, which may still have to be made,

wherein the instrument has a head section for performing operations on vascular tissue,

wherein the stabilizer and the instrument are provided with, respectively, an instrument stop provided on the stabilizer and a stabilizer stop provided on the instrument, which stops define a stop position when in contact with one another, and wherein, when the instrument is inserted through the proximal end into the working duct and when the stops are in the stop position, the stops unambiguously define the position of the head section with respect to the position of the loop shape,

wherein the assembly further comprises at least one of (i) a guide on the stabilizer on which the instrument stop is provided such that it can slide along the guide and with respect to which the instrument stop can be locked and (ii) a guide on the

instrument on which the stabilizer stop is fitted such that it can slide along the instrument and with respect to which the stabilizer stop can be locked,

wherein the stabilizer comprises a tubular working duct defined by a tubular wall and having a length and a diameter extending transverse to the length, wherein the length extends in an axial direction from a proximal end of the working duct to a open distal end of the working duct, and wherein the length is larger than the diameter,

wherein the loop of said one or more suction nozzles is provided at the distal end of the working duct and extends in circumferential direction of the working duct, and

wherein the guide is provided at the proximal end of the working duct and extends essentially transverse to the loop shape.

88. (currently amended) An assembly comprising:

a suction source;

an instrument to be positioned in or around a passage surrounded by vascular tissue; and

a stabilizer for stabilizing said vascular tissue surrounding said passage with respect to the instrument,

wherein the stabilizer is provided with one or more suction nozzles running in the shape of a loop, which suction nozzles are operationally connected to the suction source in order

to suck tightly to tissue close to and around said passage, which may still have to be made,

wherein the instrument has a head section for performing operations on vascular tissue,

wherein the stabilizer comprises a tubular working duct defined by a tubular wall and having a length and a diameter extending transverse to the length, wherein the length extends in an axial direction from a proximal end of the working duct to an open distal end of the working duct, and wherein the length is larger than the diameter,

wherein the loop of said one or more suction nozzles is provided at the distal end of the working duct and extends in circumferential direction of the working duct, and

wherein the stabilizer and the instrument are provided with, respectively, an instrument stop provided on the stabilizer and a stabilizer stop provided on the instrument, ~~which stops~~ which stops define a stop position when in contact with one another, and wherein, when the instrument is inserted through the proximal end into the working duct and when the stops are in the stop position, the stops unambiguously define the position of the head section with respect to the position of the loop shape, and

wherein, in the stop position, the instrument and the stabilizer are both mechanically fixed in the longitudinal direction such that the instrument and the stabilizer cannot move longitudinally with respect to one another.

89. (currently amended) An assembly comprising:

a suction source;

an instrument to be positioned in or around a passage surrounded by vascular tissue; and stabilizing said vascular tissue surrounding said passage with respect to the instrument,

wherein the stabilizer is provided with one or more suction nozzles running in the shape of a loop, which suction nozzles are operationally connected to the suction source in order to suck tightly to tissue close to and around said passage, which may still have to be made,

wherein the instrument has a head section for performing operations on vascular tissue,

wherein the stabilizer comprises a tubular working duct defined by a tubular wall and having a length and a diameter extending transverse to the length, wherein the length extends in an axial direction from a proximal end of the working duct to an open distal end of the working duct, and wherein the length is larger than the diameter,

wherein the loop of said one or more suction nozzles is provided at the distal end of the working duct and extends in circumferential direction of the working duct,

wherein the stabilizer and the instrument are provided with, respectively, an instrument stop provided on the stabilizer and a stabilizer stop provided on the instrument, ~~which stops~~ which stops define a stop position when in contact with one another, and

wherein, when the instrument is inserted through the proximal end into the working duct and when the stops are in the stop position, the stops unambiguously define the position of the head section with respect to the position of the loop shape, and

wherein, in the stop ~~position~~ position, the instrument and the stabilizer are both mechanically fixed in an angular direction such that the instrument and the stabilizer cannot rotate with respect to one another.

90. (currently amended) The assembly according to claim 59, wherein the assembly further comprises at least one of (i) a guide on the stabilizer on which the instrument stop is provided such that it can slide along the guide and with respect to which the instrument stop can be locked and (ii) a guide on the instrument on which the stabilizer stop is fitted such that it can slide along the instrument and with respect to which the stabilizer can be locked, wherein the guide is provided at the proximal end of the working duct and has a direction of extension essentially transverse to the loop shape.

91. (previously presented) The assembly according to claim 67, wherein the one or more radial suction nozzles open in the radially outward direction.

92. (previously presented) The assembly according to claim 66, wherein the one or more axial suction nozzles running in the shape of a loop comprise one or more inclined suction nozzles opening outwards obliquely with respect to the axial direction of the working duct.

93. (previously presented) The assembly according to claim 59, wherein a sealing ring is provided at the distal bottom end of the working duct.

94. (previously presented) The assembly according to claim 60, further comprising a said fixing device carried on the head section.

95. (previously presented) The assembly according to claim 94, wherein the fixing device comprises a heart valve prosthesis.

96. (previously presented) The assembly according to claim 59, wherein the working duct is a hollow double walled working duct.

97. (previously presented) The assembly according to claim 59, wherein the loop is a saddle-shaped loop defining a saddle shaped plane, and wherein the one or more suction nozzles



of the loop are each oriented perpendicularly to the plane determined by the saddle shaped plane.

98. (previously presented) The assembly according to claim 59, wherein the stabilizer comprises a flange which is provided at the distal end of the working duct and extends in radial outward direction with respect to the working duct.

99. (previously presented) The assembly according to claim 98, wherein the flange is provided with said one or more suction nozzles.

100. (previously presented) The assembly according to claim 73, wherein said part of the stabilizer comprising the one or more suction nozzles is provided with adhesive, in particular tissue adhesive, arranged along and/or at the location of said one or more suction nozzles.

101. (previously presented) The assembly according to claim 73, further comprising a tissue adhesive, one or more adhesive nozzles provided at the loop, and an adhesive feed connected to the adhesive nozzles for feeding adhesive.

102. (previously presented) The assembly according to claim 101, wherein said suction nozzles are connectable to the adhesive feed to form said adhesive nozzles.

103. (previously presented) The assembly according to claim 101, wherein the one or more adhesive nozzles comprise one or more compartments which are open towards the tissue to be sucked tightly by the one or more suction nozzles.

104. (previously presented) The assembly according to claim 101, wherein the stabilizer comprises a flange which is provided at the distal end of the working duct and extends in radial outward direction with respect to the working duct, and wherein the flange is provided with said one or more adhesive nozzles.

105. (previously presented) An assembly comprising:

a suction source;

an instrument to be positioned in or around a passage surrounded by vascular tissue; and

a stabilizer for stabilizing said vascular tissue surrounding said passage with respect to the instrument,

wherein the stabilizer is provided with one or more suction nozzles running in the shape of a loop, which suction nozzles are operationally connected to the suction source in order

to suck tightly to tissue close to and around said passage, which may still have to be made,

wherein the instrument has a head section for performing operations on vascular tissue,

wherein the stabilizer comprises a tubular working duct defined by a tubular wall and having a length and a diameter extending transverse to the length, wherein the length extends in an axial direction from a proximal end of the working duct to an open distal end of the working duct, and wherein the length is larger than the diameter,

wherein the loop of said one or more suction nozzles is provided at the distal end of the working duct and extends in circumferential direction of the working duct, and

wherein the instrument is, in said axial direction, removably insertable through the proximal end into the working duct such that the instrument and the stabilizer can be separated into distinct elements, and

wherein the one or more suction nozzles running in the shape of a loop comprise one or more radial suction nozzles opening in a radial direction of the working duct.

106. (previously presented) An assembly comprising:

a suction source;

an instrument to be positioned in or around a passage surrounded by vascular tissue; and

a stabilizer for stabilizing said vascular tissue surrounding said passage with respect to the instrument,

wherein the stabilizer is provided with one or more suction nozzles running in the shape of a loop, which suction nozzles are operationally connected to the suction source in order to suck tightly to tissue close to and around said passage, which may still have to be made,

wherein the instrument has a head section for performing operations on vascular tissue,

wherein the stabilizer comprises a tubular working duct defined by a tubular wall and having a length and a diameter extending transverse to the length, wherein the length extends in an axial direction from a proximal end of the working duct to a open distal end of the working duct, and wherein the length is larger than the diameter,

wherein the loop of said one or more suction nozzles is provided at the distal end of the working duct and extends in circumferential direction of the working duct, and

wherein the instrument is, in said axial direction, removably insertable through the proximal end into the working duct such that the instrument and the stabilizer can be separated into distinct elements, and

the one or more suction nozzles running in the shape of a loop comprise one or more axial suction nozzles opening in the axial direction of the working duct.

107. (currently amended) The assembly according to claim 59, further comprising a suction line extending from the suction source up to the suction nozzles, wherein the suction line is operationally separated from the cylindrical lumen defined by the wall of the working duct.

108. (currently amended) The assembly according to claim 59, further comprising a suction line extending from the suction source up to the suction nozzles, wherein the suction line comprises a suction passage formed in the interior of the wall of the working duct, which passage extends from the suction nozzles up to a proximal part of the working duct.

109.(previously presented) The assembly according to claim 73, wherein the assembly further comprises a closure adapted for closing the axial passage through the said part which can be uncoupled from the stabilizer.

110. (previously presented) The assembly according to claim 73, wherein said part, which can be uncoupled from the stabilizer, defines a first part, wherein the assembly further comprises a further said part, which can be uncoupled from the stabilizer, as a second part, and wherein the first part and second part can be coupled to each other.

111. (previously presented) The assembly according to claim 59, wherein one or more valves are arranged in the cylindrical lumen of the working duct, which valves allow passage of an instrument.

112.(previously presented) The assembly according to claim 111, wherein the one or more valves comprise flapping or sphincteral parts.

113. (currently amended) A combination [[of]] comprising a first assembly according to claim 59 and a second assembly, wherein each assembly is according to claim 59.

114. (previously presented) The combination according to claim 113, wherein the part of the stabilizer of the first assembly that comprises the one or more suction nozzles running in the shape of a loop can be completely or partially uncoupled from the rest of the stabilizer of the first assembly to form a first separated part, wherein the part of the stabilizer of the second assembly that comprises the one or more suction nozzles running in the shape of a loop can be completely or partially uncoupled from the rest of the stabilizer of the second assembly to form a second separated part, and wherein the first and second separated part can be , directly or indirectly, coupled to each other.

115. (previously presented) The assembly according to claim 59, wherein the part of the stabilizer that comprises the one or more suction nozzles running in the shape of a loop can be completely or partially uncoupled from the rest of the stabilizer and, when uncoupled, coupled to the rest of the stabilizer.

116. (previously presented) The assembly according to claim 59, wherein, viewed in axial direction, the working duct is curved.

117. (previously presented) The assembly according to claim 59, wherein, viewed in axial direction, the working duct is bendable or flexible.